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The proposed Memorial in Potomac Park as it will appear viewed from Arlington Heights

THE SITE FOR THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

BY JAMES BARNES

THE grandchildren of the present generation, if it is to be hoped, will see in the national capital a city very different from that which the visitor of today sees on his visit.

It is over a century since there was laid out, by a gifted Frenchman named L'Enfant, who had come to America at the time of the Revolution, a scheme embracing wide avenues, vistas, and parks. Eleven years ago, when the National Park Commission, composed of Daniel H. Burnham, Charles F. McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., reported their plans for the development and improvement of Washington, they practically adopted these submitted by this long-forgotten and unknown engineer, who died with no promise that his work would ever be carried into effect. Lately, one of the architects of the Capitol, draws this authentic pen picture of the man who first sought to make Washington beautiful. Under date of August 12, 1860, he writes:

"Daily through the city stalks the picture of a man, L'Enfant and his dog. The plan of the city is probably his, though others claim it. This singular man, of whom it is not known whether he was ever married to his profession or not, had the courage to undertake any public work that might be offered to him. He has not succeeded in any, but was always honest and is now miserably poor. He is too proud to receive any assistance, and it is very difficult to find manner his assistants."

The original plan of L'Enfant consisted of spreading avenues diverging from the Capitol, and a wide parkway or esplanade stretching in tree-bordered walks and greenwood from the Capitol to the Potomac. The first park commission, when they adopted this, saw fit to place the proposed Lincoln Memorial on the river side at the end of this parkway, on the axis made by the dome of the Capitol and the Washington monument. This site is in what is now known as Potomac Park, and is near the approach to the memorial bridge that will connect the city of Washington and Arlington.

The Fine Arts Council that was appointed by President Buchanan, a body of thirty artists—architects, painters, sculptors, and landscape gardeners—confirmed this judgment. Later, on May 17, 1860, a Commission of Fine Arts, serving without pay, was appointed under an act of Congress by President Taft. It was composed of the following distinguished members: D. H. Burnham, F. D. Millet, Thomas Hastings, Daniel French, Charles Moore, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. In their report of July 17, 1911, this commission unanimously concurred in the views of their predecessors as to the most advantageous site for the memorial.

John Hay, a man of state and judgment, had in these words given his opinion:

"A I understand it, the place of honor is on the main axis of the plan. Lincoln, of all Americans next to Washington, deserves this place of honor. It was the immortal. His monument should stand alone, remote from the common habitations of men, apart from the business and turmoil of the city, isolated, distinguished, and serene. Of all the sites, this near the Potomac, is most suited to the purpose."

The Commission of Fine Arts placed in nomination for the position of architect for the Lincoln memorial Mr. Henry Bacon, of New York City; and the Lincoln Memorial Commission, made up of President Taft, Senators Shelby M. Cullum, H. D. Money, and George

Peabody, Watson, and Representatives Joseph G. Cannon, Champ Clark, and Samuel W. McCall, appointed Mr. Bacon to design an appropriate memorial. Two or three other sites have been suggested, but Mr. Bacon, after a careful survey, also became convinced that the Potomac Park site was the only proper one. With an eye to the natural surroundings, which are capable of great development, he created a plan, comprehensive and dignified, whose position is shown by the accompanying illustrations.

In one measure resembling a Greek temple, the memorial is, to quote from a recent description: "A rectangular, windowless building, being surrounded by a colonnade composed of thirty-six Doric columns forty-four feet high and seven feet five inches in diameter at the base."

The material will be white marble. This colonnade, with the building it incloses, will stand on a terrace bounded by granite walls. The thirty-six columns will represent the states in the Union in Lincoln's time—the Union which he preserved. On the frieze over each column will be carved in high relief a wreath made of pine and laurel, and to the right of each of these will be cut the name of a state; while on the attic, the extension of the cells appearing above the cornice, will be carved memorial garlands of festoons of immortelles and wheat, one for each state in the Union at the time the memorial is erected, which, presumably, will be forty-eight.

Thus the building will typify the Union, the great idea which was conceived by the builders of the Republic, and which Lincoln helped to preserve and perpetuate—an idea which survives. In no better way could Lincoln be memorialized.

The size of this memorial will not be alone its claim to one of the world's great monuments, yet the terrace will be 246 feet long by 186 feet wide, the colonnade 186 feet by 118 feet, the cells will measure 163 feet by 83 feet, and the ceiling will be 40 feet above the floor, the interior Ionic columns being 50 feet in height.

It is the intention that a statue of Lincoln will stand directly opposite the main entrance and that on the walls will appear in bas-relief the immortal words of Lincoln's Gettysburg speech and his second inaugural speech. Flanked by a wide unbordered lunette, led up to by the fine vista of the tree-bordered avenues, and surrounded by the open verdant covered spaces, this memorial should have a character of indelible beauty, and of the great man who in his loneliness of soul stood out purer and aloof, but remote, with a grandeur all his own like a monument.

The reports of these various commissions have received the approval of the United States Senate, and the matter, having been brought before the House of Representatives, has been referred to the Library Committee.

It is to be hoped that before long the work on this memorial will begin, and will be a step toward the beautifying of Washington and a worthy monument to Abraham Lincoln.



The Memorial will occupy this site along the axis of the Capitol and the Washington Monument